

The Cleveland Museum of Art has just acquired three important Gothic tapestries which hung for many years, possibly for centuries, in the Chateau de Chaumont. Entitled TRIUMPH OF ETERNITY, GOOD FORTUNE, and EVIL FORTUNE the tapestries were woven in France during the late fifteenth century yet they are still extraordinarily brilliant in color and in almost perfect condition.

The personages in the scenes are arrayed in elegant costumes. They lived in and loved the out-of-doors. When the sun shone and nature smiled, they picnicked and listened to music in garden, field and wood. Their gloomy castles were merely a refuge from enemies and bad weather.

The castles and landscapes of the tapestries suggest the valley of the Loire where vegetation is luxuriant and rich in color. The scenes are characteristically Gothic with high skyline and well-covered surface although the vertical lines are shorter and less accentuated and the drapery folds less perpendicular than tapestries of earlier periods.

Reds, blues, golden yellows and the naturalistic greens of the vegetation predominate. The texture is masterful - faces and other light surfaces stand in sharp contrast to the middle lights and shadows and are vibrant with atmosphere and life.

The first panel TRIUMPH OF ETERNITY bears an inscription warning us that Fortune - like the weather and earthly love - is fickle. Only in Heaven is life permanent. The central figure is the Virgin, symbol of Eternity, robed in a gown of blue silk covered by a mantle in cloth of gold in pomegranate design. She holds open on her lap a richly illuminated manuscript as angels place a crown on her head and surrounding angels make heavenly music. A feeling of supreme peace pervades the composition.

The second panel GOOD FORTUNE is one of the gayest and most beautiful tapestries remaining to tell us of the happy outdoor life of long ago. A young man representing Good Fortune is caressed by a lady as he offers her an

apple. Nearby a little man plays both flute and drum, while another musician thrums an instrument and a jester brings fruit and wine. On the right are old age, youth, and a tiny unicorn. A brook with ducks and birds and tiny personages create a lively foreground, while a monumental castle dominates the background.

The third panel is a continuation of the second and is entitled EVIL FORTUNE. Rich costumes, jewelry, music, flowers and trees are the background for a merry party of four young men and four maidens. The verse reminds us of evil fortune and the impermanence of earthly life. As the weather changes, so must youth yield to old age and death.

The Chateau de Chaumont was built in the fifteenth century by Pierre and Charles d'Amboise. During the sixteenth century it belonged to Catherine d'Medici and then to Diane de Poitiers.

Until recently the tapestries were part of the Clarence H. Mackay Collection. They were purchased for the Museum through The Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Bequest, The John L. Severance Fund and gifts from various donors.

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